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AN EPISTLE TO A FRIEND.

Felix, qui potuit Rerum cognoscere Causas!

DUBLIN:
Printed by and for GEORGE FAULKNER, in *Essex-Street*, opposite to the *Bridge*, MDCCXXXIII.

TO THE READER.

THE Author judged it neceſſary to illuſtrate ſome Parts of the following Epiſtle by a few ſhort Notes; ſhould thoſe who may find an ampler Explanation wanting conſult Father Malbranche, *they will meet with full Satisfaction in that Point, which is the meaneſt Advantage to be received from the Works of that incomparable Author.*

BRITISH MUSEUM

AN EPISTLE to a FRIEND.

THE Wiſeſt are by narrow Bounds confin'd,
And ſome few Truths fill up the ſtreighten'd Mind:
Succeſſive Thought our Knowledge might extend,
But ſoon in Death the mazy Chain muſt end;
Yet you with Lumber ſtuff the ſcanty Room;
Yet you the Moment in vain Search conſume;
In ruſty Antiques, Dates, and Habits trace,
Or curious, meaſure the Ætherial Space;
In diſtant Times, and airy Realms, you roam,
Unmark'd the preſent, and unknown your Home;
How ſluggiſh Matter can inſpire the Soul,
The blended Actings of the various Whole
Firſt learn; e'er yet you ſearch what ruling Force
Conſtrains the Orbs to dance their meaſur'd Courſe;
What to yourſelf, to others, what you owe,
Firſt ſeek, e'er *Euclid's* Elements you know;
'Tis not enough, tho' Truths unnumber'd thence,
Shine in the ſplendid Rays of Evidence;
They ſhou'd be uſeful too, what moſt concern
Mankind; for ſuch, alone, Mankind ſhou'd learn.
Of Things, be thou, the great Creator, known,
Reaſon's firſt Link be fix'd upon thy Throne;
Juſtly to Thee is due, who *Reaſon* gave,
The firſt, its grateful Tribute, to receive;
That e'er we were, now are, and e'er ſhall be,
Paſt, preſent, future, all we owe to Thee;

You

You will, the World starts forth, from nothing brought
Ceaſe, and it thinks into its former Nought;
Thought, Motion, Reſt, the univerſal Frame,
A new Creation ev'ry Moment claim.
All Matter's Maſs thou juſtly didſt produce,
For Sov'reign Man's ſuperior Body's Uſe;
That Body thou as juſtly haſt deſign'd
Subſervient to the more exalted Mind;
The Mind to thee, to thee ſhould juſtly tend,
Thou Soul of All, of All thou Cauſe and End.

FAR then be thoſe, who impiouſly believe
The Infinite no finite Minds perceive;
Are we then form'd by Heaven to know and love,
What, by no Means, our narrow Powers can move?
When holy Flames inſpire the raptur'd Breaſt,
Are Sighs and Pray'rs to nothing then addreſs'd?
Almighty Being! with all Virtues fraught,
To Thee all other Things are truly nought:
Hence *Chriſtian Atheiſts*, ye a God diſclaim,
And worſhip, in his Stead, an empty Name.

GOD, in himſelf firſt known, attentive know
Thoſe * Types in him that Things created ſhow,
Of Worlds unnumber'd, and of this the Scheme,
Divine, eternal, uncreate, the ſame;
For, e'er Creation was, th' Almighty Mind,
From long Eternity, the World deſign'd;
'Midſt others, never to be made, choſe this,
In Poſſibility's immenſe Abyſs:
Thence the great Syſtem's various Parts he drew
Alone, and in himſelf alone, he knew.

THE fix'd Ideas juſt Proportions teach,
Greater or leſs, more or leſs perfect each;
One Foot exceeds its Half, nor Pow'r divine
Can change the Nature of that ſingle Line;
Angels than Men more perfect Beings are,
And more Perfections Men than Beaſts declare;
Theſe Truths eternal Pow'r omniſcient ſees,
On theſe he forms his ever-made Decrees:

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* *This is founded on Father* Malbranche's *Syſtem of our ſeeing every Thing in God.*

Nor

Nor can he better love what merits leaſt,
Wherein his Attributes are leſs conteſt,
Man than an Angel, † and than Man a Beaſt.
Hence *Reaſon*, hence immortal *Order* ſprings,
Knowledge and *Love* that juſtly ſuit the Things.
Hail ſacred Law! the univerſal Fate,
Which God himſelf can never violate.

While Man in Nature's Purity remain'd,
By Pain untroubled, and by Sin unſtain'd;
Fair Image of the God, and cloſely join'd,
By Inmate *Union* to the heavenly Mind;
In the pure Splendor of ſubſtantial Light,
The Beam divine of *Reaſon* bleſs'd his Sight;
Seraphic Order in its Charms he view'd,
Seeing he lov'd, and loving he purſu'd;
His Thoughts, his Inclinations were the ſame,
With the almighty Source from whence they came.
Nor dar'd the Body, humble Slave, controul
The ſov'reign Mandates of the ‡ ruling Soul.

But, lo! by Guilt the ſacred Union broke,
Man bows to Earth beneath the heavy Yoke;
The darkling Soul ſcarce feels a glimmering Ray,
Shut in groſs Senſe from out immortal Day:
Now righteous Vengeance injur'd Order arms,
And wraps in Terrors all its heavenly Charms:
Dreadfully beauteous!
Material Objects ſpiritual Souls poſſeſs,
Paſſions inſlave, and ſervile Cares oppreſs;
Force, Rapine, Murder, Guilt's long direful Crew,
Diſtracted Nature's Anarchy purſue;
No more pure Reaſon groſſer Minds can move,
No more can Order's Charms perſuaſive prove;
But as the borrowing Moon's reflected Day,
Gleams on the ſhadow'd World a feeble Ray,

† *Here thoſe Beings are taken as they are ideally in God.* Vide *Malbranche.*

‡ *Before the Fall the Soul had an abſolute Power over the Organs of the Body, and ſo was affected only with ſuch Senſations from without, as it was pleaſed to receive.*

Some

Some wand'ring Beams of Reaſon, Law contains,
And Order's Rule muſt be inforc'd by Pains.
Hence written Statutes; Tortures hence are giv'n,
And Magiſtrates the neceſſ'ry Curſe of Heav'n.
NAY, e'en the Verb Divine, *To be obey'd*,
Muſt ſpeak to Senſe, and be in Fleſh array'd.
Vainly ſhall Truth in all its Rays appear,
If Eyes don't ſee, and if the Ears don't hear;
And ſtill as vain, if Paſſion don't incite,
Diſtaſte avert, or * Pleaſure don't invite.
Thus ſaving Grace, the Paſſion's Aid employs,
And Sin with its own fav'rite Arms deſtroys.
BE thoſe few Rays in human Laws that ſhine,
Pure Emanations from the Fount Divine;
Such as from Thence the poliſh'd *Grecians* drew;
Such as from Them th'improving *Romans* knew;
Such as can pierce the Gloom of *Pagan* Night,
And untaught *Savages* in Woods enlight;
Such as the Murd'rers lifted Arm arreſt,
And blaſt the lurking Crime within the Traytor's Breaſt;
Such as on Scaffolds can the Guiltleſs ſave,
And rack on Thrones th' offending ſcepter'd Slave;
Such as the Wretch condemn'd indignant owns,
And hails their Beauty with his dying Groans.
Law, from this Source, like the bleſs'd Tree of Life,
E'er yet the Dæmon Snake beguil'd the Wife,
Propitious rear'd from EDEN's ſacred Ground,
Spreads its wide Arms, diffuſing Bleſſings round:
Unlike that Plant, which from th' unhallow'd Earth,
Of ruthful Paſſion takes its baneful Birth:
In ſome grim Tyrant's Breaſt deep fix'd its Roots,
From the black Source th' infectious Poiſon ſhoots;
Oppreſſion's bitter Draught diſtilling flows;
Death its curſt Fruit, and agonizing Throws:
But vengeful Order plies the flaming Brand,
And blaſts the Tree, within the Planter's Hand.
SUPPOSE the Law repleat with Truth Divine,
Had Order ſhone in ev'ry ſacred Line;

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* *The Holy Emotions which the Juſt feel.*

Laws

Laws that to all in general extend,
Muſt often fail to reach the deſtin'd End;
E'en thoſe by which unerring Heav'n deſign'd
To ſave, and to preſerve † all human Kind;
The diff'rent Circumſtances, Time and Place,
And Things and Perſons change the varying Caſe;
The Murd'rer 'ſcapes, the Innocent muſt bleed,
And Oaths, and *L*— 'gainſt *T*— and Truth ſucceed;
S— Gains his Cauſe, and juſt was the Decree;
He ſtarves in Jail for his Attorney's Fee.

Even you, O Senate, where fair Truth preſides,
Whom Order governs, and whom Reaſon guides;
Makers of Laws, beſt knowing where they tend,
Who loſe the Letter to preſerve the End.
You too muſt fail, and from thy Sov'reign Court,
To Heaven's Tribunal be the laſt Reſort:
There injur'd Innocence finds quick Redreſs,
And Juſtice damns who legally oppreſs.

Since ſuch is Man deprav'd, that Fear muſt ſway,
To tread thoſe Paths where Duty points the Way:
The Wretch muſt ſuffer to forewarn the reſt,
And ſome muſt fall to ſtop the ſpreading Peſt:
Hence publick Pains; what to the Crime is due,
O Judge Supreme, muſt be reſerv'd to you!
Alone the gen'ral Welfare, can demand
The tender Tribute, from the bleeding Hand.
Such the ſole End, then ſhould no gloomy Spleen,
Int'reſt, nor Rage, no Paſſion intervene.

This well, thou know'ſt, O Rogerson! whoſe Seat
To ſuff'ring Innocence is ſure Retreat:
Severely juſt, and piouſly ſevere,
The Crime you puniſh, while the Pain you ſhare:
Tears with the dreadful Words of Sentence flow,
Nor does the righteous Judge the Man forego.

Far other He, if ſuch a Monſter were,
Whom Agony can feaſt, and Groans can cheat;

† *The Laws of Nature and Grace often fail in particular Circumſtances, in bringing about thoſe Ends for which the Divine Author inſtituted them; yet no others can be every Way ſo perfect.*

With

With gloomy Joy elate, whose baleful Breath,
Triumphant, swells with the dread Sounds of Death;
Who on th' imploring Face malignant smiles,
And sentenc'd Wretches wantonly reviles.
Such, far from hence; where CÆSAR's gentle Sway,
With subject Hearts the willing World obey.
To those curs'd Realms, rul'd by some Tyrant God,
Whose Scepter's Persecution's Iron Rod,
There may this Lord his faithful Slave command,
And trust his Bow-string to his ready Hand.

PHAVN her Savage beasts, his Serpent NILE,
But Both in One infest our fated Isle:
Portentous Beast, to those bless'd Climes unknown,
A monst'rous Birth peculiar to our own.
Well, may no other Venom curse the Ground,
Exhausted all to form this dire Compound!
Well, may no Wolves destroy the fleecy Care,
Since fiercer these the trembling Shepherds tear!
If raucour'd Malice, or low Rage provoke,
The Sword of Justice deals the Villain's Stroke!
The Reptile Crew pollute her Rites Divine,
And Plunder sheltr'd underneath her Shrine.

TIBERIUS foremost in the blotted Roll
Of gloomy Tyrants! Well, thy subtil Soul
Chose vile ‡ Informers, Tools of fetter'd Spite,
The Pimps of Fortune, and the Scourge of Might!
Fitly on such supporting Props reclin'd
The Shame, the Dread, the Pest of Human-kind!

HAIL, mighty TRAJAN! thou were truly great,
Who to the Crime proportion'd well their Fate;
Nor did to wrong'd ASTRÆA Pow'r refuse,
To damn the Wretch who did her Pow'r abuse.
By this one Action, thou hast far outdone
Thy proudest Triumph o'er the *Parthians* won.

AND Thou, our *Cæsar*, may thy righteous Hand,
From the fell Monster save the frighted Land;
Nor shall *Alcides'* Toils more Merit claim,
Nor higher raise than Thine his deathless Name.

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‡ *Quod maxime exitiabile tulere illa Tempora, cum Principes Senatus infimas etiam Delationes exercerent, alii propalam, multi per occultum.* Tacit.

FINIS.